

A Guide to Amber



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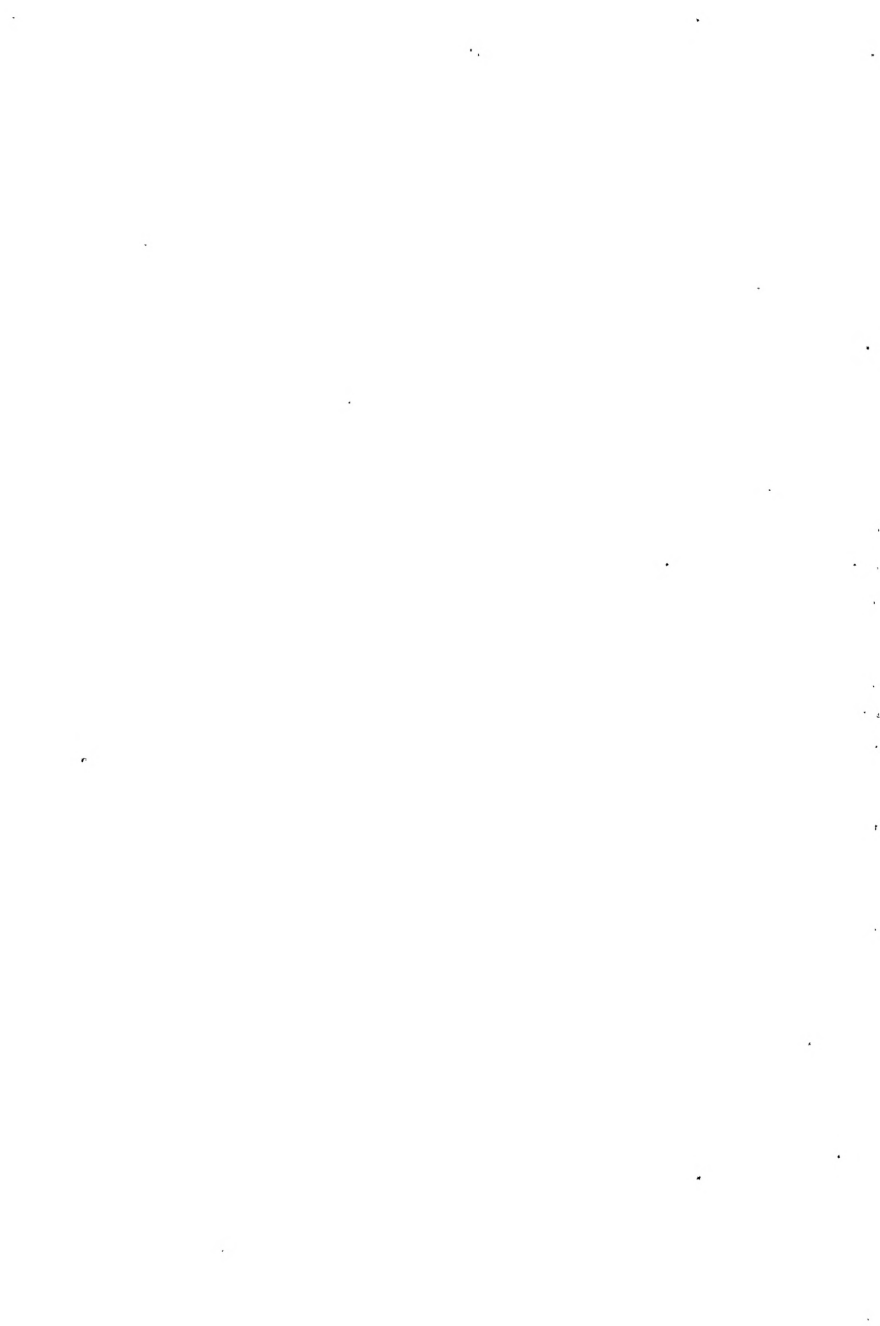
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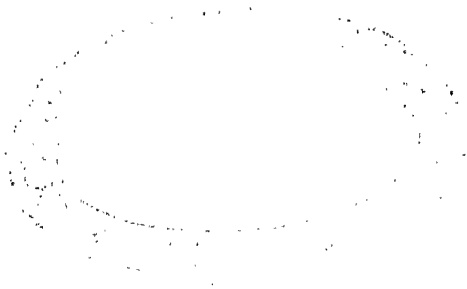
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His Highness Sawai Man Singh II,
the Maharaja of Jaipur.

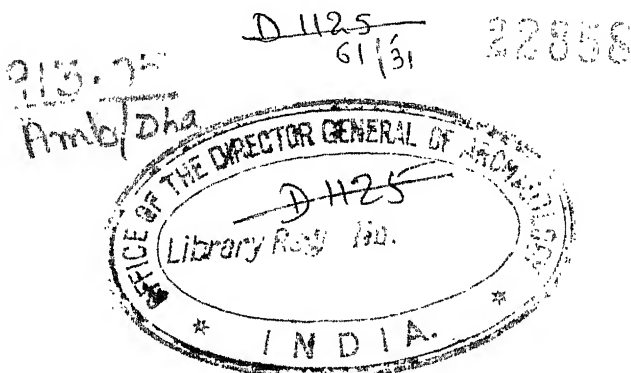
A GUIDE TO AMBER

BY

B. L. DHAMA

OF THE

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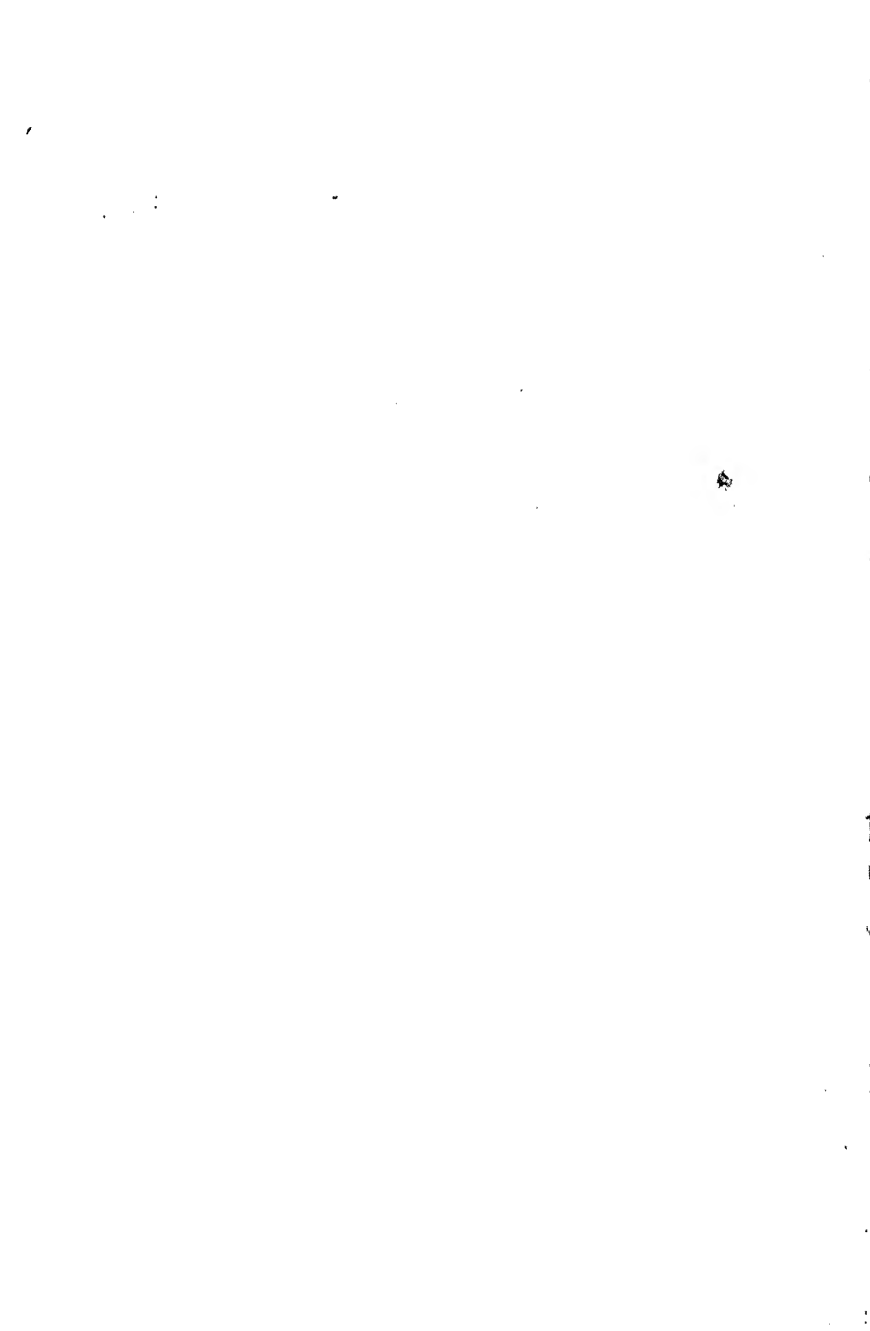


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PREFACE

THIS little Guide to Amber, the ancient seat of the House of Jaipur, has been written in commemoration of the happy occasion of His Highness the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II's investiture on the throne of his distinguished predecessors, and it is hoped will serve as a useful cicerone for visitors to Amber. So rich is the state of Dhundar (Amber and Jaipur) in antiquities and so wide is the field for research within its borders, that volumes can be written on the subject. A preliminary Note of Inspection on a few places of interest was drawn up by the writer in 1928 in the course of his official visit, and the work deserves to be followed up, as since the days of General Cunningham little has been done for rescuing from the ravages of the jungle and meshes of oblivion the immense archæological and historical wealth which is the pride of the State. The present state of art and architecture, for which Jaipur has been deservedly famous throughout the country, is indeed deplorable, owing to lack of encouragement and decline in taste. Let us hope that under the enlightened patronage and

support of His Highness the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II the Muses of Art and Architecture will find their way back to prosperity in their favourite home and that the accession of His Highness will inaugurate a new era of revival which will recall the glories of the days of his illustrious predecessor and namesake—the Maharaja Man Singh I.

March, 1931.

B. L. DHAMA.

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INTRODUCTION

AMBER is situated about six miles to the north of the modern city of Jaipur and is reached by a good metalled road flanked on both sides with gardens, cenotaphs, palaces and various other buildings. To visit the Palace at Amber the Jaipur Darbar's permission is necessary and can be obtained free by applying direct either to the Resident or the Home Member, Mahakma Khas. Permits can also be had through the Managers of the Hotels at Jaipur.

**SITUATION
OF AND
ROUTE TO
AMBER**

Little of the history of Amber previous to the advent of the Kachhwahas in the middle of the 12th century A.D. is known, except that it was held by the Susawat Minas whose descendants still inhabit this part of the country. The Kachhwahas claim their descent from Kusa, the second son of Rama, the hero of the Ramayana, and a descendant of the Solar race reigning at Ayodhya.

HISTORY

Tradition avers that Rohita, also called Rohitasva, one of the ancestors of the Kachhwaha clan and son of king Harishchandra,

migrated from his parental abode and built the Fort of Rohtas in Bihar on the river Son. After the lapse of several generations another distinguished scion, Raja Nala, is said to have migrated westward from Rohtas and founded the kingdom and city of Nalapura or Narwar in the Gwalior State in Samvat 351 or A.D. 294.

The last of the Kachhwaha princes of Gwalior and Narwar was Tejkarana, son of Sodh Singh, commonly called Dhola Rai. Deprived of his kingdom by his nephew Parmal Deo, a Pratihara prince, Dhola Rai left Gwalior in Samvat 1023 or A.D. 966 and laid the foundation of the State of Dhundar, now known as Jaipur. Maidul Rao, the son of Kankul, the posthumous son of Dhola Rai by Maroni, conquered Amber from the Minas. He was succeeded by Hundeo who in his turn was succeeded by Kuntal. Both these princes continued their warfare against the Minas, and the latter prince, having firmly established his rule throughout Dhundar, was succeeded by Pajun whose exploits are eulogised in the bardic poem known as Chand Raisa. Pajun married the sister of Prithvi Raj, the last Chauhan king of Delhi, and fought bravely on the side of his chivalrous brother-in-law

in many of his important battles against the Chandels of Mahoba, Jaichand of Kanauj and Shihab-ud-din of Ghor. In the last mentioned struggle he was killed and succeeded by his son Malasi. The latter was not wanting in the attributes which his father, Pajun, possessed, and gained a victory over the prince of Mandu.

Passing over the intermediate princes, whose reigns present little of interest, we come to Bihari Mal, also called Bhar Mal and Puran Mal, from whose time the history of Amber becomes definite. He was the first prince who made an alliance with Babur in about A.D. 1527, and was made a commander or *mansabdar* of 7,000 horse. His son Bhagwan Das was also admitted to high rank in the imperial army by Akbar, while his adopted son Man Singh I became Akbar's most trusted friend and general. He received the title of Raja and a rank of 5,000, and held in succession the Governorships of Kabul, Bihar, Hajipur, Patna and Bengal. He died during the reign of Emperor Jahangir in A.D. 1614 in the Deccan, and was succeeded by his second son Bhao Singh who died a premature death due to excessive drinking. Bhao Singh was succeeded by his nephew Maha Singh, the son of Jagat Singh, the eldest son of Man Singh I. Maha Singh

died in Berar and was succeeded by his son, Jai Singh I, better known as Mirza Raja Jai Singh. He served under Emperor Shah Jahan and was made Governor of the conquered provinces of the Deccan by Emperor Aurangzeb who considered him to be a suitable person to deal with his implacable foe Shivaji. Jai Singh by his power and influence aroused the jealousy and resentment of Aurangzeb and was recalled to the court in A.D. 1667, but died on his way at Burhanpur where his mausoleum, known by the name of Raja ki Chhatri, still exists in the locality called Jaisinghpura.

Jai Singh was an accomplished ruler. He knew the Turkish, Persian and Arabic languages. His death gave Aurangzeb greater liberty in his policy of persecution of the Hindus and the destruction of their temples. He was succeeded by his eldest son, Ram Singh.

Ram Singh received the title of Raja from Aurangzeb and was put in possession of his father's territory but reduced to a *mansab* of 4,000. He died in the year A.D. 1675 and was succeeded by Bishen Singh who was reduced to a *mansab* of 3,000. Having enjoyed that dignity for a short period, this ruler died and was succeeded by the illustrious Sawai Jai

Singh II who founded, after his name, the new city of Jaipur in A.D. 1728. From this time the town of Amber lost its importance, and the history of the subsequent rulers of Dhundar is associated with the new capital.

Man Singh I was an ambitious ruler and possessed a great taste for architecture. To him and Mirza Raja Jai Singh I we owe a great debt for the ancient glory of Amber, where art and nature have so happily been combined (Plate II). Both these princes erected several important edifices. The best mementoes of the former's architectural achievement are to be seen at Amber, Rohtas and Brindaban. No remains of the latter's buildings, except those at Amber, have survived.

ART AND
ARCHITECTURE

Among the Rajput palaces of the mediæval period the palace at Amber stands unsurpassed by any similar edifice in Rajputana. Man Singh I, Mirza Raja Jai Singh I, and Sawai Jai Singh II were chiefly responsible for the buildings in it. The work of each of them is distinguishable from that of the others, and the whole in its turn bears impress of influences emanating from the imperial court of Delhi,

with which the rulers of Amber were so closely associated.

The palace of Man Singh is essentially of Hindu style, whereas the additions made by Mirza Raja Jai Singh and Sawai Jai Singh exhibit more Saracenic influence. Minor additions and alterations were made by subsequent rulers, but these have little or no architectural pretensions. While the palaces and other public buildings were built in the Mughal style the temple architecture retained its characteristic Hindu features peculiar to Northern India.

AMBER.

AMBER is situated on the old highway from Delhi to Ajmer and in the range of the mountains called Kali Kho, extending from Ajmer nearly to the Jumna. The Minas occupied this tract and erected Amber which they consecrated to Amba, a name of the goddess Durga, the consort of Siva. At one time the place was known by the name of Ambavati, as evidenced by an inscription dated Samvat 1714 or A.D. 1657, which is lying in Singhi Jhuntha Ram's temple at Amber.

The city is surrounded by embattled walls crowned, at suitable intervals, by watch-towers and provided with several gates, principal of which are the Ghati, Kheri and the Varahi Darwazas. The Ghati Darwaza stands on the ridge overlooking both Amber and the modern city of Jaipur, while the Varahi Darwaza, which is a massive structure, lies in the valley and opens into *Baharli* or outer Amber, through which passes the main road to Delhi. A little further beyond this gate on the right of the road is a group of cenotaphs of the old rulers of Amber.

There are hardly any remains worth mentioning that can be ascribed to the Mina chiefs or the rulers prior to Man Singh I, and it seems probable that the home of the Amber Rajas must have been somewhat insignificant before the sixteenth century A.D.

Within the city are numerous buildings, such as palaces, temples, cenotaphs, mosques and private houses. In common with many other ancient monuments these have undergone renovations which are in effect prejudicial to the understanding of the history of ancient art and architecture.

PALACE,

Of the buildings at Amber the most remarkable is the palace, which is an excellent specimen of the palace architecture of the mediæval time.

Standing on a terraced plateau at the south-west foot of the Jaigarh Fort hill and overlooking the town of Amber in the valley, it forms a most imposing edifice (Plates III and IV). It is reached both from the town side and from the Dilaram garden, which is built on the bund of the lake, called Maota, on the left of the road where it makes a sharp bend towards the town.

The lower terrace of the hill is occupied by a great courtyard surrounded on three sides by extensive blocks of buildings, formerly used as barracks and stables. The court is called Jalaib Chowk, and is entered from the east and the west by two splendid arched gateways, known as Suraj Pol and Chand Pol from their facing towards the rising sun and moon respectively.

On the upper plateau to the south of this great court are the royal palaces, access to which is obtained through a double gateway, called Singh Pol or Lion gate, and reached by a large flight of steps (Plate VI). The latter is flanked by massive pylons surmounted at their ends by pillared pavilions, wherein the kings once took their seats while witnessing the great *balidan* or sacrifice of goats and buffaloes offered on the eighth day of the month of Asvin or Asuj in honour of the goddess Kali enshrined in the temple just behind the Singh Pol. On the west side of the approach to the temple of Kali, there is a long passage on the ground, which leads from the Jalaib Chowk to the Tripolia Gate of the Zenana palace, while on the east side of the flight of steps of the Singh Pol is the Kachahri or the court buildings, which consist of a row of

rooms with a verandah in front. Further to the east and adjoining the Kachahri building is the Palki Khana or the palanquin house which comprises only a long verandah, one bay deep and 7 bays long. Above the Palki Khana and just under the Diwan-i-Am is the Daftar Khana or the Record Office.

The double gateway, known as the Singh Pol, opens into the Diwan-i-Am court. It was at one time ornamented with fresco paintings which have entirely perished.

The Diwan-i-Am is the work of Jai Singh I and is a remarkable building of its kind (Plate V). It occupies the north-east part of the court and consists of a large rectangular hall with a vaulted roof supported by a single row of marble pillars. It is enclosed on all sides by verandahs with double rows of red stone columns surmounted by sculptured elephant brackets which in their turn support a massive entablature. It is said to have aroused the jealousy of the Emperor Jehangir, to appease whom it is said to have been covered with stucco. This tradition may or may not be correct. It is, however, a well-known fact that during the Mughal period

red stone buildings were frequently finished with stucco which in its turn was decorated with paintings.

The roof of the Diwan-i-Am is called Sarad Punam-ki-Chandni (the light of an autumn full-moon) and is enclosed by screen purdah walls raised upon the parapet of the buildings. The roof has direct communication with the Zenana portion of the palace, and was used as a sleeping place in the hot weather. The construction of the purdah wall is attributed to Raja Sawai Jai Singh II.

The east side of the Diwan-i-Am and its court, which were originally open, are now blocked by later buildings known as Antagarh (billiard house) and Satais Chowka Dalan known as Tosha Khana and added by Raja Ram Singh II (1835-80). Corresponding to the Satais Chowka Dalan on the west are similar dalans which are closed up and are used now as store rooms and servants' quarters.

The south side of the Diwan-i-Am court is occupied by double-storeyed arched dalans, with a very noble entrance called Ganesa Pol in the middle (Plate VII). This gateway was built by Raja Sawai Jai Singh II and provides

access to the inner court, in which the principal apartments of the king are situated. On the east of the court referred to above is the Diwan-i-Khas, known as Jai Mandir and also Shish Mahal on account of the beautiful mosaic and inlaid work of glass used on its inner walls (Plate VIII). The Diwan-i-Khas was built by Mirza Raja Jai Singh I and consists of two oblong chambers, two smaller rooms, one on either side of the rear oblong chamber, and a large verandah surrounding three sides of the front chamber. In front of the Diwan-i-Khas is a large terrace and a garden. In the centre of the terrace is a tank provided with fountains. On each side of the Diwan-i-Khas are arcades, the one on the north being connected with the Hammam or the Bath and the stairs which lead to the Sarad Punam-ki-Chandni roof of the Diwan-i-Am. The arcade on the south is connected with the stairs leading to the roof of the Diwan-i-Khas itself.

The buildings on the roof of the Diwan-i-Khas and the Ganesa Pol are respectively called Jasa Mandir and Sohag Mandir. The Jasa Mandir building comprises an oblong chamber, with splayed corners and surmounted by a curvilinear roof and two octagonal side rooms

crowned with domes. The Sohag Mandir consists of a rectangular chamber roofed by a flat oblong dome, and flanked by an octagonal room with an octagonal dome on either side. The latter building was used by the royal ladies as a sitting chamber from where they could witness through the marble jali screens the State functions held in the Diwan-i-Am and its court.

In front of the Diwan-i-Khas and beyond the garden stands a building known as Sukh Mandir, to which the royal family resorted during the mid-day in the hot weather. This building consists of a large oblong chamber with side rooms and a screened verandah in front, overlooking the garden. The main chamber is provided in the middle of its back wall with a beautiful marble cascade enclosed within an arched marble framework which is pierced through with foliage perforations through which blows a cool westerly breeze. The cascade is connected with a channel running across the chamber and opening into the garden. The floor of this channel is inlaid with black and white marble strips arranged in a zigzag design called *Laharia*. The old doors of the Sukh Mandir palace are exceptionally beautiful, being inlaid

with ivory and sandal-wood arranged in panels of various geometrical designs (Plate IX). Attached to this building on its north and south sides are arcaded dalans with open areas in front. The south dalan is connected with a double-storeyed passage running along the south side of the court, and the other with a ramp leading to the Ganesa Pol terrace on one side, and with the staircase of the Sukh Mandir itself on the other.

The roof of the Sukh Mandir contains a reservoir which supplied water to the cascade and the fountains in the garden. This tank was fed by means of a water channel built over the above mentioned double-storeyed passage and connected with a water-lift at the side of the lake outside the palace. The water-lift is now in ruins.

MAN-
SINGH'S
PALACE

Behind the double-storeyed passage referred to is the old palace of Man Singh. Access to this edifice is obtained from the Diwan-i-Khas terrace through a small entrance and a winding passage which opens into the quadrangle of the palace. The old palace has been much modified by the addition of several small courtyards, a large Baradari in the centre of the quadrangle and other later accretions.

The corner towers of the palace and the rooms under them are decorated with beautiful tile and colour work, the greater part of which has decayed or disappeared. The north-east and north-west towers are crowned by domes; the other two have pitched roofs similar to those in Jodh Bai's palace at Fatehpur Sikri near Agra.

Each side of the quadrangle of the palace is provided with a pair of staircases to give access to the roof. The monotony of the long sides of the court is broken by the addition of Jharokas or balconies over the parapets of the roof above the entrances of the staircases. The balconies on the north side, where a second storey of rooms with a high wall over them were added later to give privacy to the quadrangle of the palace from the direction of the Jaigarh Fort, are missing. Behind Man Singh's palace and on its west side there are other royal chambers, to see which permission is usually not granted.

This is an old Vaishnavite temple situated at the north-west foot of the palace hill (Plate X). It consists of a sanctum and an oblong hall with projecting screened windows on two sides which

JAGAT
SIROMAN-
JI'S
TEMPLE

admit light into it. In front of the temple is an elaborately sculptured Garuda shrine approached by the same flight of steps as the main temple. The temple is said to have been built by Kunkavati in memory of her brother Kunwar Jagat Singh, the eldest son of Man Singh, who predeceased his father. The *torana* or the triumphal arch, standing at the north-east end of the terrace, forms the principal approach to the temple precincts. (Plate XI).

**NARSINGH-
JI'S
TEMPLE**

Close to Jagat Siromanji's temple, to the south west, is situated the 'first home' of the Kachhwaha rulers at Amber. Though small and irregular in plan, the building is interesting from historical point of view. It is commonly known now-a-days as Narsinghji's temple owing to a portion of the building being occupied by a small temple dedicated to god Narasinha.

The Maharajas of Jaipur are annointed here in a pavilion called *Rajtilak ki chhatri*; and important ceremonies in connection with the first marriage of the Rulers are performed in a room which is known as Balabai's Sala (apartment).

In the western portion of the compound of the Narsinghji's temple is a marble *torana* or

triumphal arch which is ornamented with figures of several *avatars* or incarnations of the god Vishnu, and other Hindu deities such as Ganesa, Surya, Brahma and Siva, and covered with floral decorations and figures of peacocks all inlaid with black and various other stones. The *torana* was built by the Sishodini mother of Mirza Raja Jai Singh I in Samvat 1702 or A.D. 1645, as a stand for a swing to be used for the image of the deity Jagat Siromanji, which is brought out of its temple once a year to this place during the months of Phalguna and Chaitra (March-April).

This is one of the several old Jain temples lately converted into Saivite ones. It stands on a high basement and is said to have been built by Singhi Jhuntha Ram, the Kamdar and Assassin of Raja Jai Singh III. It consists of a courtyard, surrounded on the east and the west by dalans two bays deep, a dalan one bay deep on the north, and the temple proper on the fourth side. The latter consists of a domed assembly hall surrounded by a passage, and built in front of a row of three shrines crowned by separate *sikharas*. The temple is entered by a domed entrance on the north side. Standing on a *chabutra* in the centre of the courtyard one sees a small chhatra, built at a later date.

SINGHI
JHUNTHA
RAM'S
TEMPLE.

Behind the temple, across the street, is the house of Jhuntha Ram, now in possession of the Thakur of Chomu. It is a good specimen of domestic architecture of the seventeenth century A.D.

AKBAR'S
MOSQUE.

In the north-east corner of the city, opposite the Kos Minar or Akbar's mile stone, there is a mosque which was built by the order of Akbar in A.H. 977 or A. D. 1569, as is recorded in a Persian inscription inset in the left jamb of the central arch of the building. The mosque has undergone considerable repairs and hardly retains its original architectural features, and from its present style it appears as if it was built during the time of Aurangzeb.

CONCLU-
SION.

This little book, should, by no means, be considered as comprehensive. There is still a lot of material at Amber, which the author had neither the facility nor the leisure to collect. May this little Guide, however, prove to be the forerunner of a full and exhaustive account of this old and deserted City of Amba, where big works of architecture were once attempted with great success and where the goddess of Architecture may still be seen in all her purity and glory !

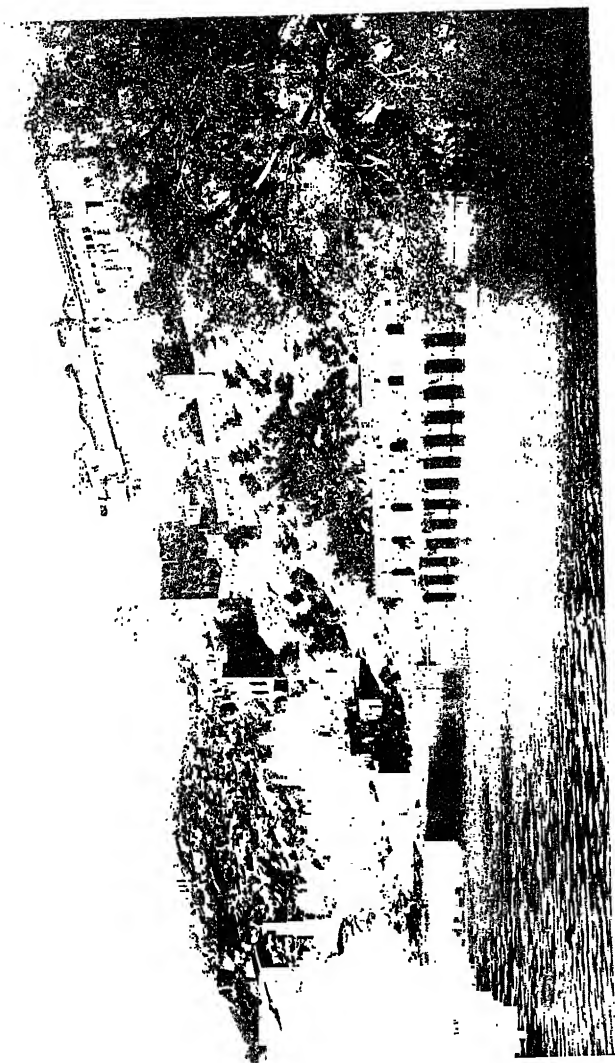


City of Amber, from south-west.

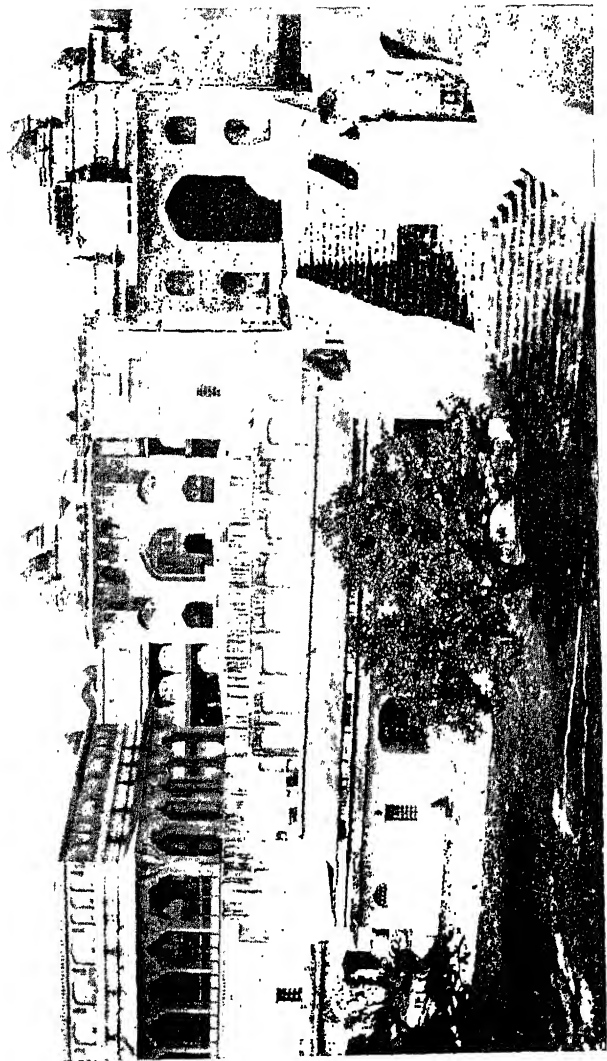




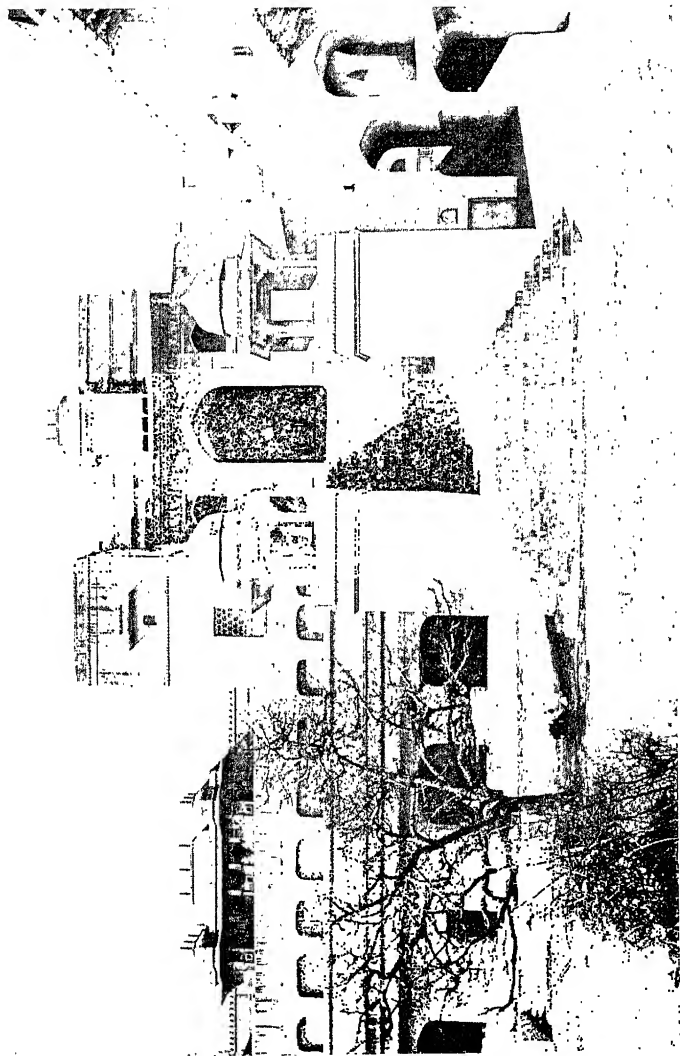
General view of the Amber Palace, Jaigarh and the Maota, from north-west.



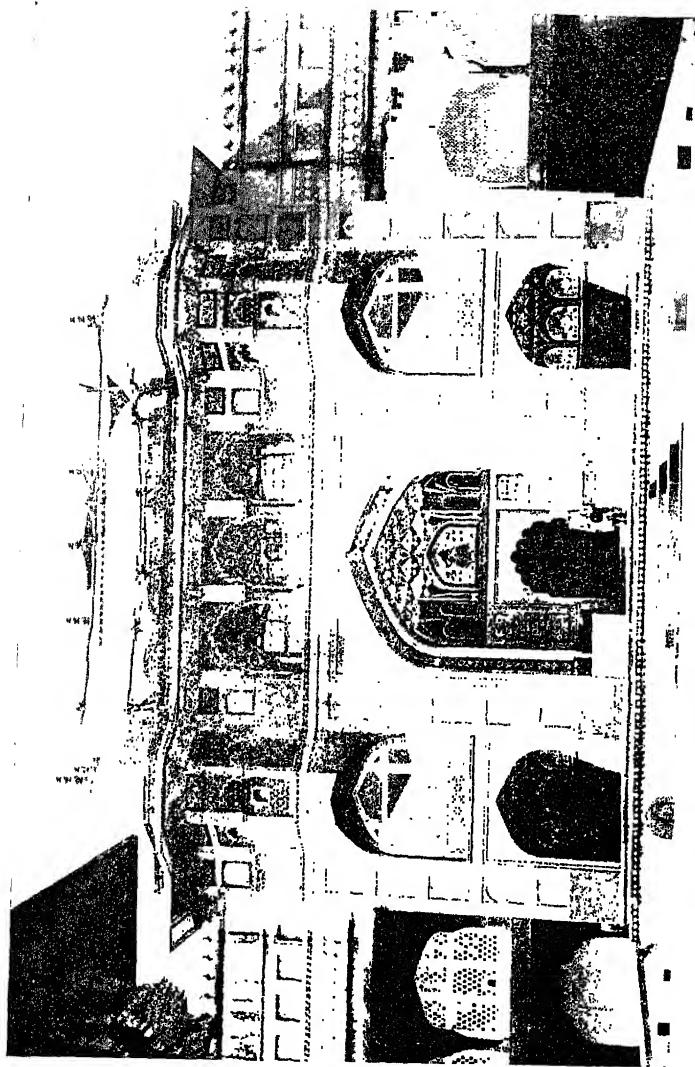
Detailed view of the Amber Palace and the Maota, from north-west.



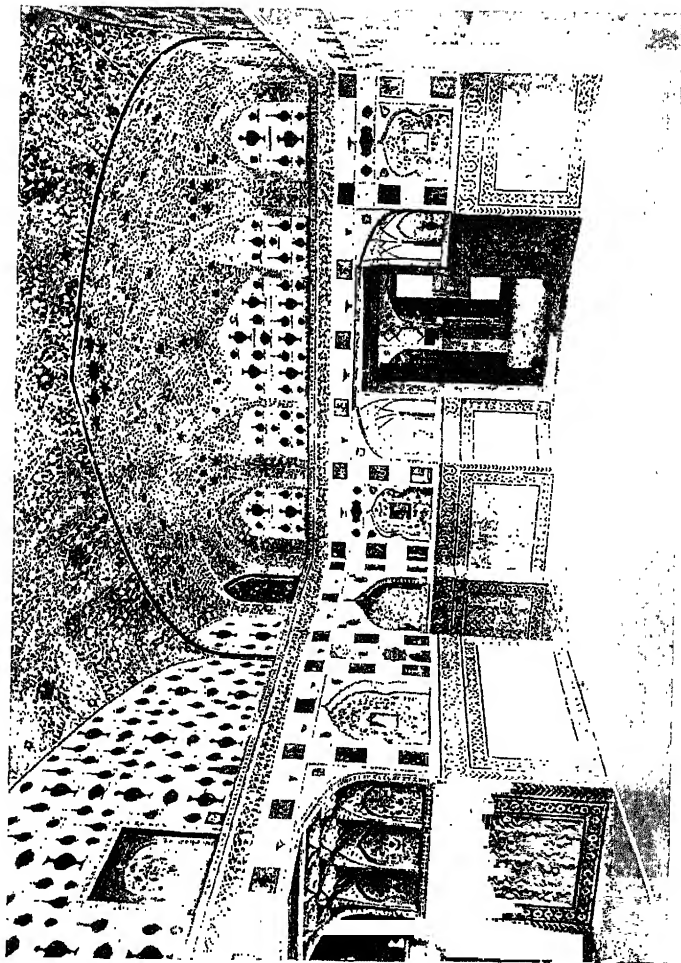
General view of the Amber Palace showing Diwan-i-Am on the left, Ganesa Pol in the centre and Singh Pol on the right, from north.



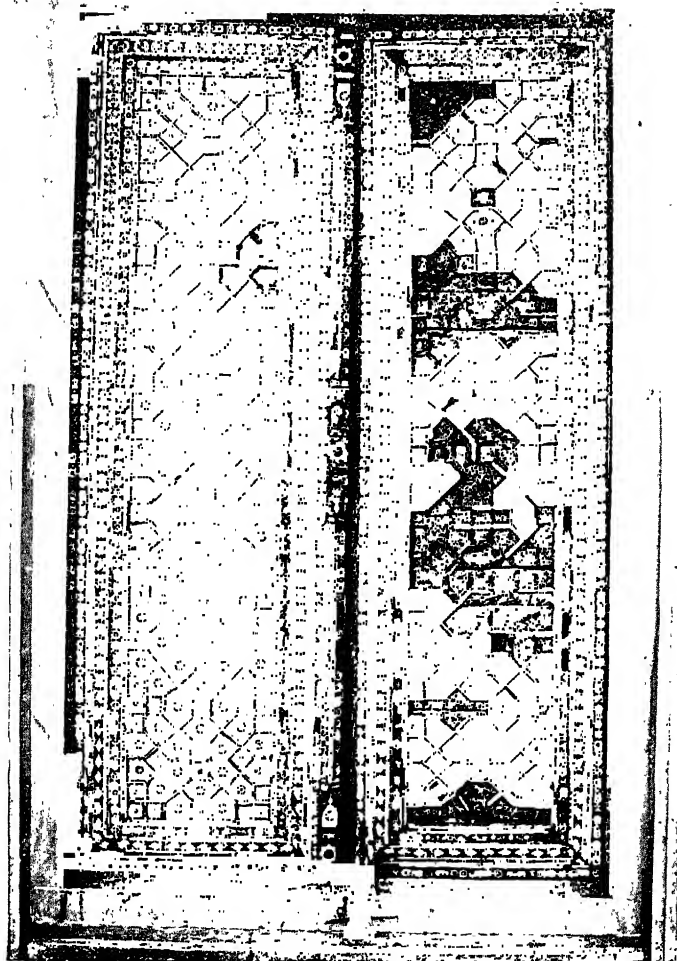
Amber Palace : Detailed view of the Singh Pol, from north.



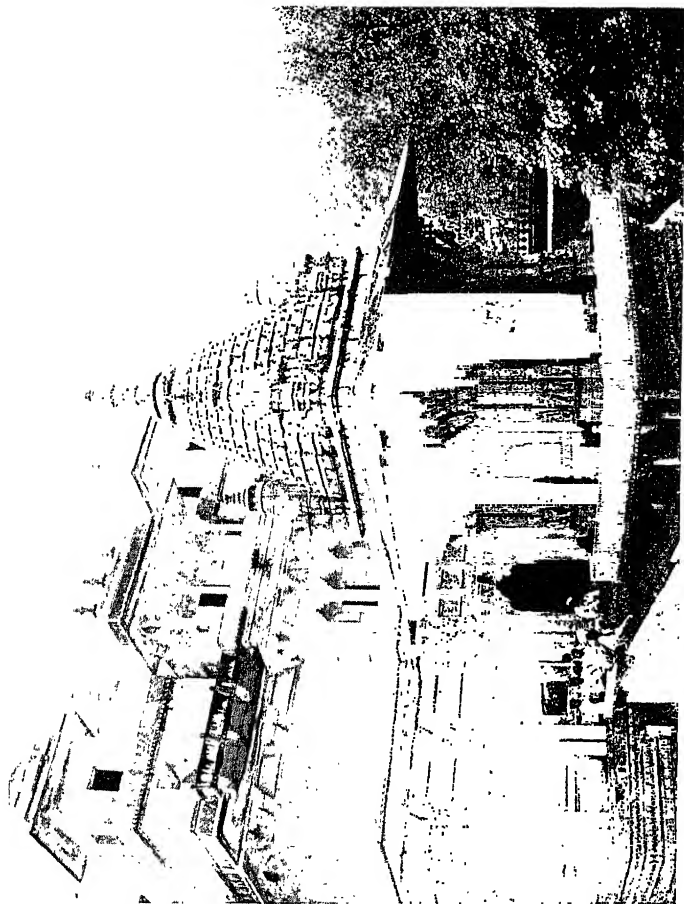
Amber Palace : Ganesa Pol, from the Diwan-i-Am court.



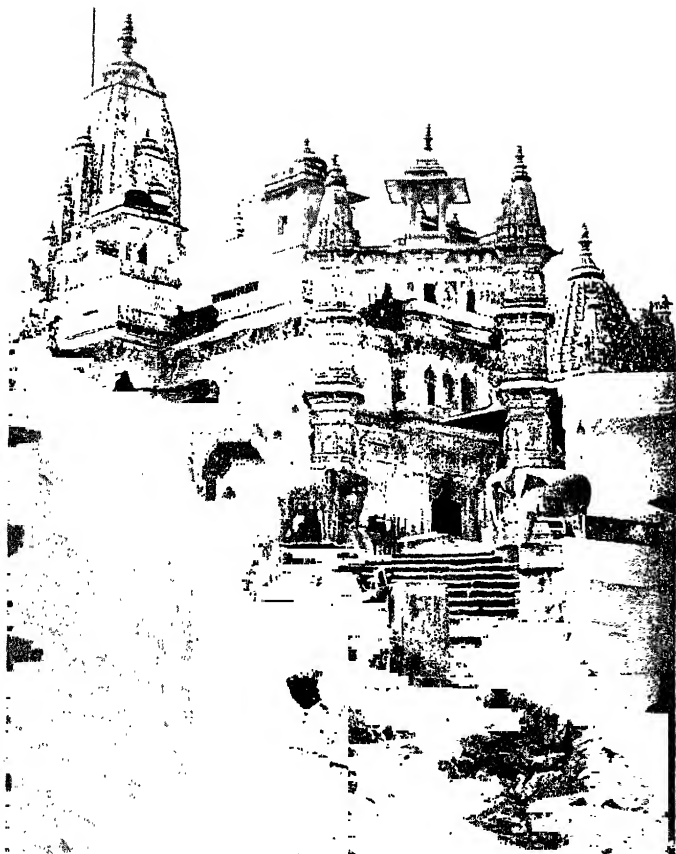
Amber Palace : Interior of the Shish Mahal.



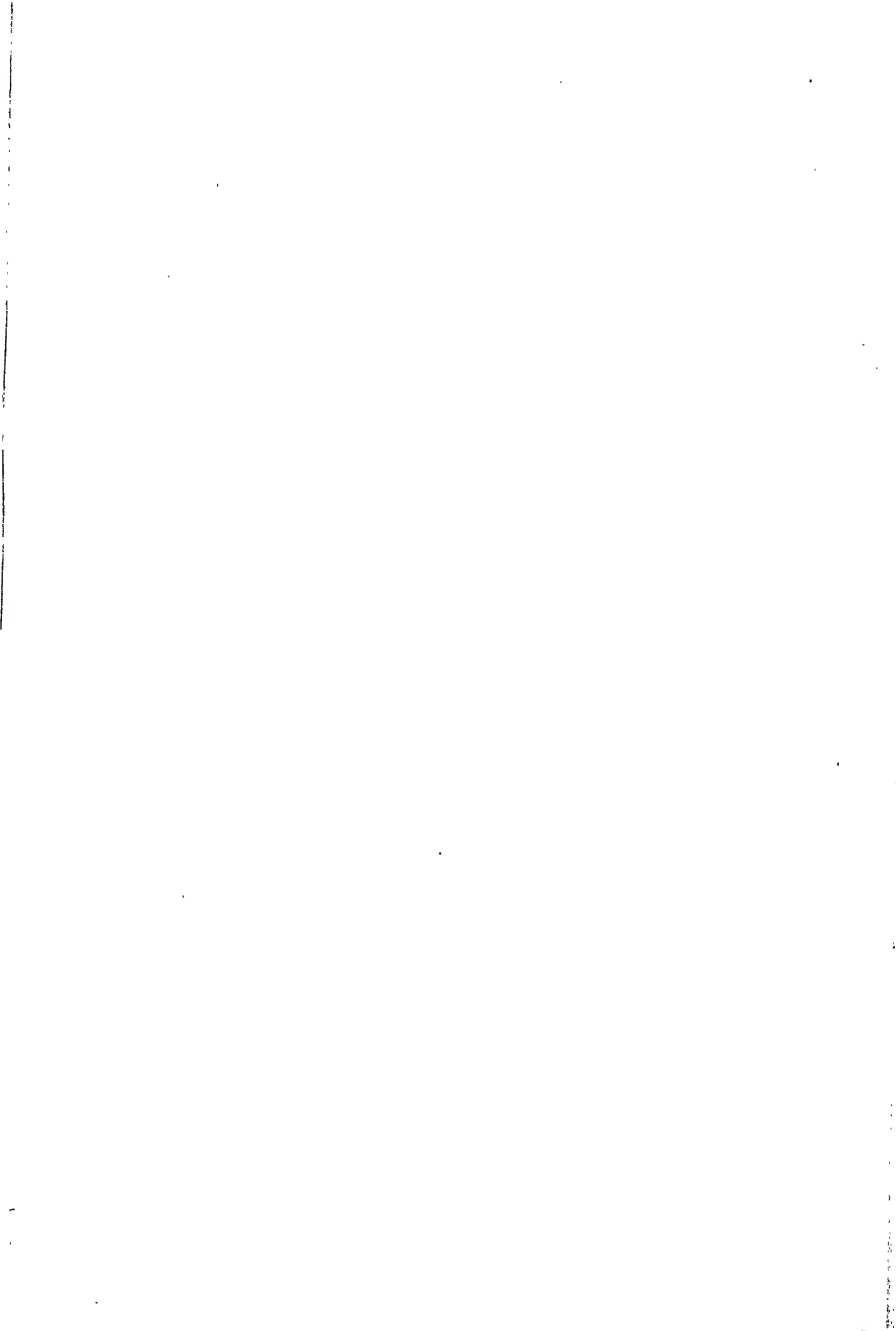
Amber Palace : Ivory and sandal-wood door in the Sukh
Mandir.



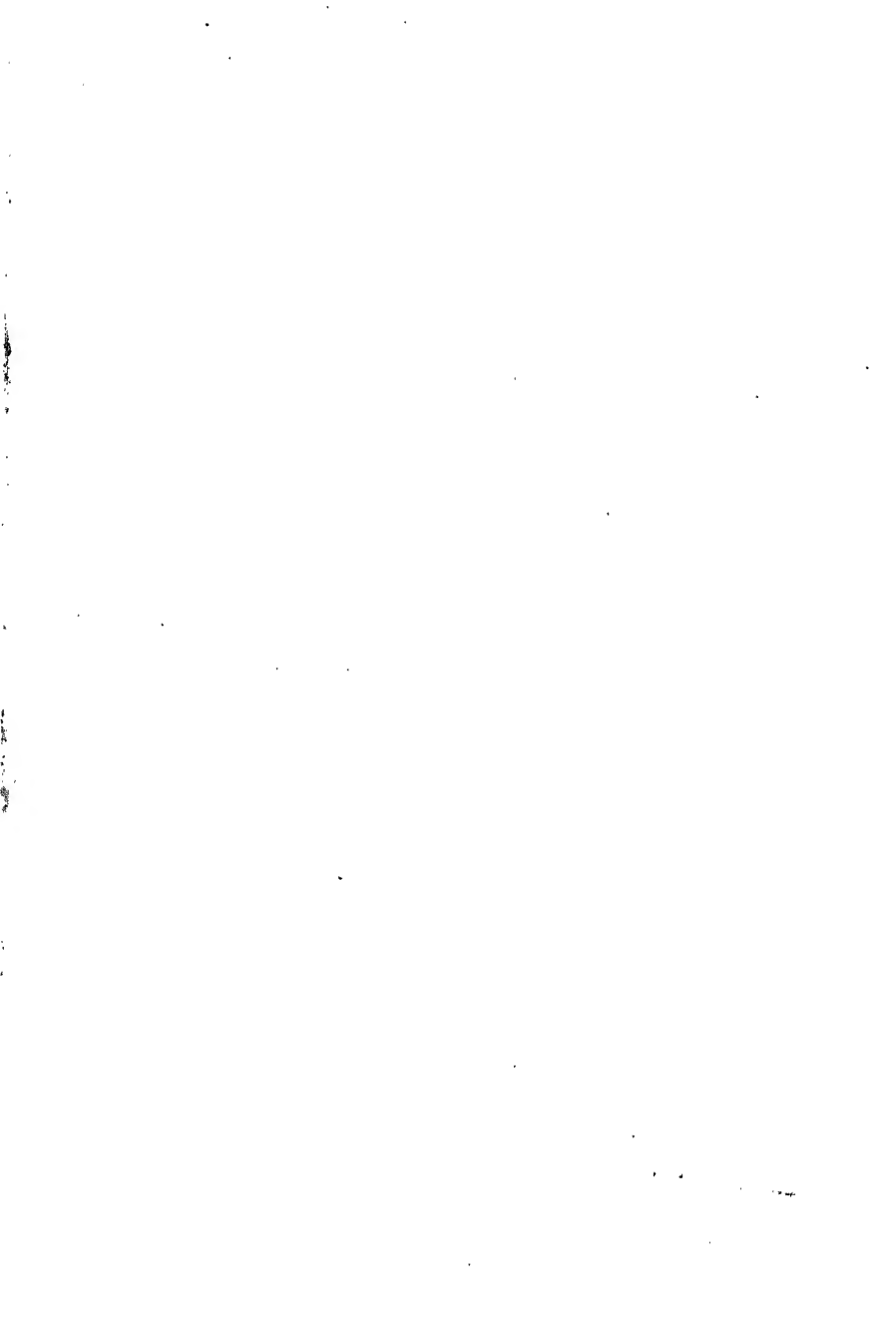
Amber : Jagat Siromanji's temple and the Garuda Shrine.

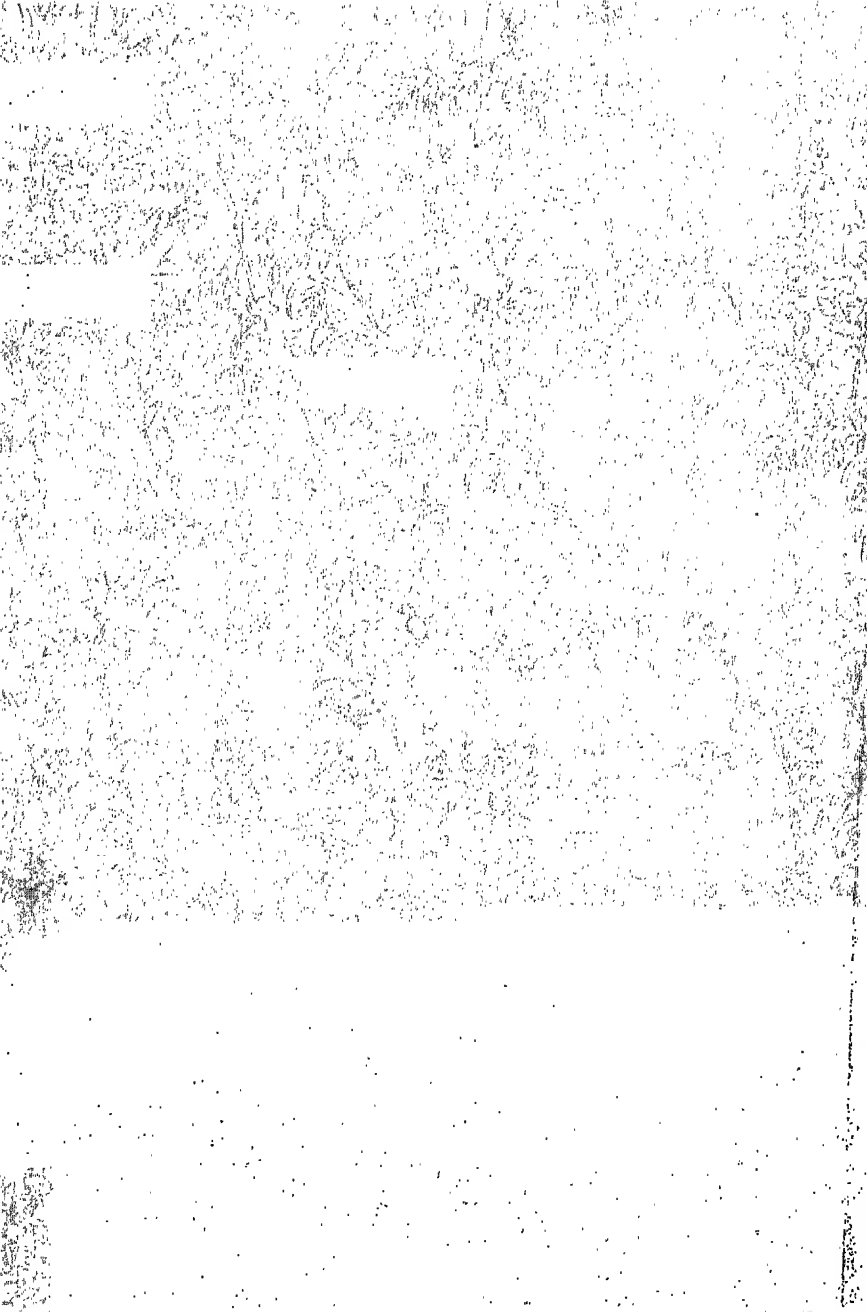


Amber: General view of Jagat Siromanji's Temple and Torna, from North-east.



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